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Summary record of the 44th meeting
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Chairman: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Organization of work

1. **Mr. Wide** (Chef de Cabinet, Office of the President of the General Assembly) said that the Office of the President of the General Assembly had rescheduled various meetings of the plenary Assembly to ensure that conference-servicing resources would be available to the Fifth Committee beyond the scheduled completion of its work at the first part of the resumed sixtieth session, so that it could consider the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide" (A/60/692 and Corr.1) and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/60/735 and Corr.1). After indicating the dates during the following two weeks when such resources would be available, he urged the Committee to begin its consideration of the substantive issues arising from the report as soon as possible and not to waste time on discussion of procedural matters, which had already been exhaustively debated.

2. **The Chairman** said that the information just provided would be taken into account by the Bureau when it met to consider the Committee's programme of work later in the morning.

Agenda item 122: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (*continued*)

Agenda item 124: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (*continued*)

Agenda item 128: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (*continued*)

Agenda item 129: Human resources management (*continued*)

Agenda item 136: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide (A/60/692 and Corr.1 and A/60/735 and Corr.1)

3. **The Chairman** recalled that the President of the General Assembly had informed the Assembly at its 75th plenary meeting that the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide" (A/60/692 and Corr.1) and the related report of ACABQ (A/60/735 and Corr.1) would be introduced in the Fifth Committee on Monday, 3 April 2006, and that those reports would be reissued under agenda items 118, "United Nations reform: measures and proposals"; 122, "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations"; 124, "Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007"; 128, "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations"; 129, "Human resources management"; and 136, "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations". The President had requested the Committee to conclude its consideration of those reports and submit a report thereon as soon as possible, or by 18 April 2006 at the latest, so as to enable the Secretariat to prepare a comprehensive detailed report by May 2006 for consideration by the Committee.

4. **Mr. Malloch Brown** (Deputy Secretary-General), introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide" (A/60/692 and Corr.1), said he recognized that the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform proposals would require strong understanding and trust between Member States and the Administration. Their cooperation in addressing the issues arising from the report would be critical for the future of the Organization. He was pleased to note that, while the Advisory Committee had requested additional information on many of the proposals contained in the report, it had not expressed opposition to the main thrust of that document.

5. He reiterated that the report was a strategic one that mapped out a vision for the Organization for the years to come. While there had been disappointment in some quarters that the proposals were not more detailed, the Administration had felt that there must first be agreement on the direction of the reforms. The main idea underlying the report was that the Organization had outgrown its existing business model. The United Nations of 2006 was much more complex, diverse and fast-moving than the United Nations of the past. Regrettably, even after several successive rounds

of reform, the Organization remained encumbered by outmoded institutional arrangements, human resources policies and financial regulations that, along with the lack of investment in such areas as training and information technology, prevented its staff from performing to the best of their abilities, notwithstanding their heroic efforts.

6. Concern had been expressed that, while the report offered some unsolicited advice on governance, it was less forthcoming about the issue of accountability. In that regard, he wished to point out that a separate report was being prepared on oversight, an issue that was as important to the Administration as it was to Member States. Clearly, more needed to be done to ensure that managers were genuinely accountable to Member States for results. Underlying the report was an offer of strategic partnership: if the Secretariat was given the means to deliver its mandates, Member States could be provided in return with better tools with which to judge the Secretariat's performance and hold it accountable. It was, of course, for Member States to propose such a bargain.

7. As the report pointed out, since 1998 there had been a fourfold increase in peacekeeping budgets and deployments and a doubling of Secretariat resources, and there were now twice as many civilian staff in the field as in the Secretariat. The report reflected those fundamental changes in the nature and location of the Organization's work. Its recommendations, which focused on leadership, human resources, finance and procurement, information technology and governance, were geared towards enhancing the delivery of operational objectives in the field. However, the report also recognized the vital global leadership role played by United Nations Headquarters in New York and the important normative work done there. The proposals on contractual arrangements were not intended to reduce the benefits of staff at Headquarters, but rather to harmonize conditions of service and end the second-class status of field staff. Furthermore, the vision of a more flexible Organization was not limited to the field. For example, within the Secretariat that vision was intended to give more General Service staff the opportunity to move into Professional posts. However, none of the reforms would succeed without a stronger information and communication technology platform.

8. He emphasized that the document before the Committee was not a cost-cutters' report, designed to eliminate programmes that did not meet certain political objectives. On the contrary, the report called for expenditure of some $275 million a year to harmonize conditions of service and for investment of about $120 million in information and communication technology. There was, however, a need to offset some of that expenditure, including by outsourcing or relocating certain activities to offices away from Headquarters. The related proposals were limited in scope and, at the current stage, the Administration was seeking only to conduct cost-benefit analyses. There was also potential for major economies in the area of procurement.

9. Taken in their entirety, the reforms were intended to build an Organization capable of responding more flexibly and effectively to global crises, conflicts and development challenges, an Organization with a single staff contract, integrated workflow systems and more simple and transparent financial management, led by managers benefiting from expanded training opportunities and selected according to the principles of gender balance and equitable geographical representation. He trusted that, as Member States scrutinized the report, they would not lose sight of that central vision.

10. The Committee had begun its detailed consideration of the report sooner than anticipated. However, the preparation of the report had been preceded by a great deal of thought and analysis, and the Administration stood ready to defend it. While delegations' questions would be answered as fully as possible, the Secretariat would need time to prepare the detailed reports requested by the Advisory Committee, and certain issues relating to human resources would only be clarified following consultations with the staff to be held in May and June. Information on those aspects of the reform would be provided in a separate report to be issued in September 2006.

11. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)), said that the Advisory Committee's main consideration in preparing its report (A/60/735) had been to facilitate the work of the General Assembly. Of particular importance in that regard was its request, contained in paragraphs 7 and 8 of its report, that the Secretary-General should prepare a detailed implementation report by the beginning of May 2006, setting out the actions and resources that would be required to carry out his vision.

12. ACABQ had also asked that the Secretary-General should include a history of previous similar proposals; an assessment of the impact of previous and ongoing reforms; an explanation of how accountability would be defined and enforced in relation to the proposals; and information on the projected return on investment and timelines for implementation. Details on the implementation of proposals relating to human resources matters should be covered in the report to be submitted to the General Assembly in September 2006.

13. The Advisory Committee's report had also addressed individual proposals which the General Assembly might wish to take into account. Many of the proposals appeared to fall within the Secretary-General's purview in his role as the Organization's chief administrative officer, and therefore did not require any specific legislative approval. Other proposals would require input from the current Secretary-General's successor, and the Advisory Committee had tried to make clear which proposals fell into which category. Issues concerning its own work and the work of the Fifth Committee should be considered directly by the General Assembly.

14. With respect to the proposal to increase the level of the Working Capital Fund from $100 million to $250 million, the Advisory Committee had been informed, following the completion of its report, that the level of $100 million had represented approximately 7.5 per cent of the budget in 1981, but currently represented just over 2 per cent. Should the General Assembly approve the Advisory Committee's recommendation that a detailed report should be submitted in May, the Advisory Committee would submit its own detailed observations and recommendations as soon as possible thereafter.

15. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group had agreed to the 18 April 2006 deadline for the submission of the Committee's report to the General Assembly at the insistence of the European Union, the United States, Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which had expressed fears that, if the Secretary-General's report was introduced in the Committee, the reforms would either die or be delayed indefinitely. He was therefore surprised that the Committee now faced delays in its work. He was grateful to the President of the General Assembly, who had made every effort to accommodate additional meetings of the Committee. However, he was concerned that the deadline would not be met, since there remained days on which the Committee would have no conference services. If that proved to be the case, he trusted that the Group would not be held responsible, for the onus should be on the delegations that had pressed for the deadline. He was tired of accusations that the Group was holding up the Committee's work, when the delays were caused by delegations awaiting instructions that never came. The Group, for its part, was ready to discuss the substance of the report right away and to work around the clock if necessary.

16. The Group strongly supported the ongoing efforts to reform the United Nations. It based its position on the fundamental principle that the intergovernmental nature of the Organization should be upheld. Member States had a common interest in making the Organization more responsive to the present-day needs of their peoples. It was therefore essential that the views of every Member State, not merely the most wealthy and powerful, should be taken into account. The legitimacy and viability of the reform measures would depend on support from Member States and from the Secretariat staff who dedicated themselves to the Organization. The reforms must be aimed at strengthening the Organization's ability to implement its mandates effectively and at rendering it more accountable to Member States, better able to serve their collective interests and more responsive to the priorities on which they collectively agreed. In addition, the United Nations should be able to recruit and retain qualified staff who reflected the Organization's international character.

17. The participants in the 2005 World Summit had recognized that development, human rights, peace and security were mutually reinforcing and had reaffirmed their commitment to tackle the numerous challenges facing the international community by strengthening the United Nations. It would be unrealistic to expect the Organization to deliver on the ambitious goals set by Member States within existing resources. In that connection, the Group attached particular importance to the provision of additional funds to address development challenges and promote the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

18. In the Summit Outcome, the Secretary-General had been requested to submit proposals that would advance ongoing reform efforts. Subsequently, Member States had adopted several measures aimed at reforming the

Secretariat and increasing its accountability to Member States. In that connection, the Group had supported the establishment of an Ethics Office, the development of a whistleblower protection policy, the strengthening of the Organization's internal audit and investigation capacity and the review of the Secretariat's oversight structures and accountability framework, and it now welcomed the opportunity to address the remaining tasks at hand.

19. Reform was an ongoing process. The proposals in the Secretary-General's report must therefore build on the positive aspects of existing reform efforts. While the Group would have preferred for the Committee to embark on its in-depth consideration of the proposals at the current stage, it recognized that the Secretariat would need time to prepare the detailed reports requested by the Advisory Committee. It fully supported that request, since such reports would help to ensure that the proposals were well thought out and rational and took account of the linkages between issues. The proposals must also reflect the unique character of the United Nations.

20. The Committee must conclude its consultations and adopt a resolution on the report as soon as possible. The Group would therefore be grateful if the Bureau could prepare a tentative programme of work for consideration by the Committee at its next formal meeting. The programme of work could be kept under review to reflect the progress of the Committee's negotiations.

21. **Mr. Drofenik** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, welcomed the Secretary-General's report, as well as the Advisory Committee's report, which was concise and well balanced. The Advisory Committee had rightly stated that certain matters, in particular the proposals relating to governance, should be subject to a policy decision by the General Assembly, not a technical review by an expert body.

22. The European Union also agreed with the Advisory Committee's general observation that a more substantive discussion would require more detailed information. It looked forward to the issuance of the implementation report, scheduled for May 2006, and noted that some proposals were within the purview of the Secretary-General and could be implemented without the Assembly's consideration. There should be more emphasis on accountability, and proposals relating to human resources should be submitted at an early stage. The European Union stood ready to work with all Member States to identify preliminary input for the Assembly's consultations. Whether such input took the form of a resolution or a letter from the Chairman depended entirely on the progress made. However, regardless of the nature of the input, it was important to provide analysis and recommendations to the Assembly.

23. Recalling the request of the President of the General Assembly that the Committee should conclude its deliberations on the matter and submit a report by 18 April 2006, he said that the report should be submitted as soon as possible. The Committee had been informed that conference services would be made available to it over the next two weeks and that every effort would be made to provide further services. The European Union fully supported and appreciated those efforts.

24. In the absence of a detailed implementation report, the European Union was not fully convinced of the need to enter into a detailed and more prolonged debate. The Secretary-General's report was meaningful and important, and the European Union objected to any name-calling and any efforts to antagonize the Committee. All members of the Committee should try to restore an atmosphere of trust and cooperation, and the European Union was certainly willing to do so in order to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

25. **Mr. Wallace** (United States of America) said that the Secretary-General's report was an important one that should be closely examined and quickly acted upon by Member States. The report covered much ground in areas that were critical for improving management and accountability. In many ways, the proposed measures were a natural follow-on to the accountability and oversight provisions contained in the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

26. The Advisory Committee had identified 23 key initiatives proposed by the Secretary-General and had recommended that the Fifth Committee should consider 14 of them. The United States requested and expected the Committee to speedily review those 14 initiatives by the deadline of 18 April 2006 set by the President of the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee had also recommended that the Assembly should consider several other initiatives in plenary

session, and the United States looked forward to the Assembly's expeditious discussion of those initiatives.

27. Lastly, ACABQ had expressed the view that the Secretary-General could act on seven recommendations within his existing authority. The United States expected and urged the Secretary-General to do so as soon as possible and would ask the Deputy Secretary-General to convey its expectations to the Secretary-General and to the Secretariat officials responsible for implementing the initiatives. The Committee should endorse the conclusions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee, and the United States looked forward to receiving the Secretary-General's second-phase implementation report.

28. **Ms. Skåre** (Norway) said that Norway's strong support for the Organization had been a cornerstone of her country's foreign policy ever since the Organization's founding. Norway had been a reliable contributor to the United Nations in terms of both funding and active participation in policy deliberations and normative processes. Her Government supported a stronger United Nations that developed and coordinated collective responses to global challenges and acted as the main forum for international lawmaking and policy formulation.

29. While her Government understood the rationale for many of the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report, it disagreed with some proposals and needed to give closer consideration to the practical consequences of others. Norway contributed a substantial amount of its public money to the United Nations. It had a responsibility to its taxpayers, as well as to the people in need of United Nations assistance, and must therefore monitor the Organization and ensure the effective and efficient management of its resources.

30. The administration of United Nations resources suffered from serious weaknesses. Steps had been taken to rectify the situation, but more must be done. If the United Nations was to enjoy full credibility, it must have a transparent, effective and accountable system for resource management. That did not mean that intricate structures and mechanisms must be created, but rather that areas of responsibility must be clear and leaders at all levels must fully shoulder their responsibilities. The impression that there were managers in the Secretariat who did not always act in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations was very damaging.

31. Norway had long been an advocate of stronger executive leadership of the United Nations and of giving the Secretary-General greater authority to manage the Organization's resources. However, greater authority for the Secretary-General and his staff, as proposed in the report, must be coupled with managerial accountability, including accountability vis-à-vis Member States. The General Assembly had addressed the issue of accountability many times, and her delegation was surprised that an adequate response had not been given.

32. With respect to the role of the Deputy Secretary-General, although Norway recognized the need for greater delegation of authority on the part of the Secretary-General, the overall responsibility should nonetheless rest with the Secretary-General. Norway cautioned against the establishment of what might be perceived as two power bases within the Secretariat, and did not believe that the General Assembly should take decisions that could undermine the Secretary-General's authority.

33. The Secretary-General had not limited his proposals to in-house reforms of the Secretariat, but had also addressed flaws in the governance system. It was understandable that many countries wished to counter perceived attempts to transfer functions from the General Assembly to a small circle of rich and powerful nations, and Norway shared that concern. If the Organization were to lose its multilateral and universal character, it would not be qualified to be the world's leading forum for addressing global problems.

34. Norway therefore strongly cautioned against the proposals to establish new governance structures within the United Nations consisting of small groups of "representative" Member States, since that would not be in its national interests or in the interest of the United Nations. The Organization's decision-making processes posed a number of major challenges, but the large number of Member States and their participation in negotiations did not constitute a problem in itself.

35. The Organization's governance challenges were more political in nature. States often seemed unwilling to compromise on their own interests during negotiations and often fell into the trap of micromanaging the Secretariat rather than giving strategic guidance. There was a tendency for Member

States to take an à la carte approach to the United Nations, and there was a discrepancy between the mandates given to the Organization by Member States and the collective resources made available to carry them out.

36. Concerns that Member States had been excluded from decision-making processes in the General Assembly should not lead to blind protection of the status quo in the Secretariat or the Assembly. The Organization must be made stronger and more efficient in ways that would benefit its true clients, the people of the world. Although her Government agreed with the main thrust of the Secretary-General's proposals on human resources management, budget and finance, there should be more clarity regarding the operative consequences of some of the proposals. It was especially important to ensure that the Organization secured the best-qualified staff, in line with Article 101 of the Charter; that improvements were made to the recruitment system; that programme managers were made more accountable for their decisions; and that personnel management was improved.

37. A number of the report's proposals did not seem to require legislative action on the part of the General Assembly, as the follow-up action fell under the Secretary-General's authority. Her delegation wished to learn more about those initiatives, and understood that specific guidance, and decisions by the General Assembly might be required at a later stage. Norway remained fully committed to the Charter, which still reflected Member States' highest ideals and objectives. However, while Member States must preserve what they had achieved, they must continually adapt and improve the Organization in order to meet the needs of a changing world.

38. **Mr. Kozaki** (Japan) said that Japan shared the objectives set out in the Secretary-General's report and would give serious consideration to the proposed reform measures. It also supported, in principle, the Advisory Committee's related report, which rightly stated that several of the Secretary-General's proposals should be implemented without delay, within the Secretary-General's existing authority. Japan urged the Secretary-General to exercise his leadership with respect to those proposals, and would strongly support his efforts.

39. Japan would closely study those proposals which required consideration by the Committee, along with the information and analyses to be provided by the Secretary-General in May, and noted that in September the Committee would also receive a comprehensive report on human resources management. The Advisory Committee's recommendations on governance were sensible, and the General Assembly, not the Committee, was the appropriate body to discuss them.

40. In view of the guidance provided by the Advisory Committee and the request of the President of the Assembly, Japan firmly believed that the Fifth Committee should come to a speedy decision as to how the Committee should proceed with its consideration of the Secretary-General's report. The Fifth Committee should prepare to engage in substantive discussions on the matter in May, and Japan would work with all parties in good faith and in a constructive manner.

41. **Ms. Stevens** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, said that the Secretary-General's report provided a valuable blueprint for streamlining and modernizing the way the Secretariat worked. The Committee had been asked to report back to the General Assembly as soon as possible, and no later than 18 April 2006, and should strictly adhere to that deadline.

42. The Committee should pay particular attention to the expert advice of the Advisory Committee, which had carefully examined the Secretary-General's report. She strongly encouraged the Secretary-General to move forward, as soon as possible, on the initiatives identified by the Advisory Committee as being within his authority. The Advisory Committee had also noted that some of the proposals could not be properly evaluated until further detailed reports were submitted by the Secretariat in the coming months. She endorsed the call for a detailed implementation report and looked forward to the reports to be submitted at the Assembly's sixty-first session. It appeared that the Fifth Committee could achieve relatively little until those reports were submitted.

43. ACABQ had also identified certain recommendations which clearly posed policy questions for the consideration of Member States, and the General Assembly was the only appropriate body to consider those questions. The Secretary-General's report should be implemented expeditiously, for the benefit of the United Nations, and the delegations of Australia, Canada and New Zealand looked forward to

making early progress on the matter and to collaborating with other Member States.

44. **Mr. Mazumdar** (India) agreed with the Deputy Secretary-General that in the discussions on the Secretary-General's report there was a need for strong understanding and trust, both among Member States and between Member States and the Secretariat. The Advisory Committee's report was clear, rational and technical, as should be expected. His delegation was glad that, following a needless procedural debate, the Committee was now in a position to move forward on the Secretary-General's report. His delegation wished to thank the President of the General Assembly and his Office for making that possible. However, the picture was somewhat clouded by the uncertainty regarding the availability of conference services, and he hoped that the matter would be resolved in a sensible fashion.

45. India would give positive consideration to the Secretary-General's proposals, many of which either represented a logical extension of the work done by the Committee at previous sessions or were issues that could not be decided upon by the Committee until further reports were submitted by the Secretary-General. In the case of certain other proposals, however, the Committee would have to examine the fundamental assumptions underpinning them and determine whether it agreed on those assumptions before moving forward. While his delegation was willing to consider any further details that might be provided on the rationale for such proposals, it remained convinced that they were not necessarily integral to the success of United Nations reform.

46. **Ms. Wang** Xinxia (China) said that her delegation attached great importance to the Secretary-General's report and would engage in serious discussion of its proposals. Her delegation would also request that full conference servicing should be provided to the Committee in order to facilitate its discussions.

47. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) said that his delegation would refrain from making substantive comments on the Secretary-General's report. Like the delegation of India, he welcomed the introduction of the report to the Committee, following a needless procedural debate. Any further procedural discussion relating to the Secretary-General's report should take place during the Committee's informal discussions in order not to waste conference services. Since an agreement had been reached on the procedure to be followed, redefining the time frame and the type of outcome to be expected from the Committee would not only be unnecessary but would also derogate from the Committee's responsibility to discharge its functions according to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Lastly, Egypt was ready to take any decisions necessary to facilitate the Committee's work.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.